

How would you as an administrator go about influencing inside and outside groups to try to innovate educational programs?

As an administrator and educational leader, it is important to establish and maintain positive relationships with school and community groups that will support the mission/vision of the school and promote a culture of learning and collaboration. In communities large and small, there will be opportunities for schools to partner with established groups such as parent-teacher organizations (PTO), boosters, and community businesses. Hoyle et.al. (1998) state, “good relations are not an accident; they are planned” (pg. 42). In addition, “the principal and superintendent must take special care to create and maintain close ties and strong communication with the grassroots community served by the school or school district” (Hackmann, Schmitt-Oliver, & Tracy, 2002 pg. 186).

School leaders must take steps to provide their teachers and students with opportunities for collaboration with groups and outside businesses/agencies that will promote a culture of learning and be beneficial to both the school and business/organization.

In order to promote and foster collaborative partnerships with organizations and businesses, school leaders must communicate the purpose and need for the proposed partnership. Doing so, “school leaders should craft their messages for specific audiences” (Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998 pg. 41). Different groups will have different missions, goals, and purposes for wanting to establish a collaborative

relationship with the school. Administrators must be careful to accurately and efficiently communicate with groups, businesses, and organizations. Many initiatives fall by the wayside due to a lack of effective communication. If a partnership is needed or desired, the school and organization must be willing to open channels of communication that will fully support and sustain the collaborative experience.

Communication practices are only small segments of the collaborative partnership approach. Administrators must also be visible in the community and actively share the school's mission, vision, and goals with groups, organizations, and community businesses. People don't know what they don't know and if a group or business isn't aware that they could be of assistance to a school or vice versa, an opportunity for mutual learning and benefit is lost.

I have had the opportunity to explore this discussion topic first-hand. At the beginning of the school year I registered to assist with the formation of a parent-teacher organization (PTO). Upon the ending of the first meeting, I had been selected as co-president. The experience of working with the school in my role as a staff developer, having two children enrolled in the school, and serving in a leadership capacity for this organization has provided many opportunities for learning in relation to collaboration with other groups, patrons, and school personnel. I strongly believe that this experience will help prepare me for working with various groups and community businesses/agencies to develop and sustain educational programs that promote the mission, vision, and goals of the school.

References:

Hackmann, D.G., Schmitt-Oliver, D.M., & Tracy, J.C. (2002). *The standards-based administrative internship*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Hoyle, J.R., English, F.W., & Steffy, B.E. (1998). *Skills for successful 21st century school leaders: Standards for peak performers*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.